



American Citizen Services Unit
U.S. Embassy Santo Domingo
Warden Message



TO: Consular Wardens

FROM: ACS Unit

DATE: January 22, 2008

SUBJECT: CONSULAR INFORMATION PROGRAM CHANGES

Following is a Warden's Message being transmitted for your information. Please circulate this to your constituents.

The Consular Information Program, the State Department's primary vehicle for informing American citizens of threats to their safety abroad, will have a new look and feel effective January 7, 2008. This message highlights those changes and previews a new name and look for the Consular Information Sheet beginning in February 2008.

Background

The Consular Information Program (CIP) is a tiered travel advice program to inform Americans of potential threats to their safety abroad. Consular Information Sheets, Public Announcements, and Travel Warnings are available on the State Department's travel information website, <http://www.travel.state.gov>, which received 343 million hits in 2006. Two documents that augment the CIP are Fact Sheets, which provide information about a major event or issue, and Warden Messages, issued by overseas posts to provide timely safety and security information to U.S. citizens in their host country.

Effective January 2, 2008, the term "Travel Alert" will replace "Public Announcement" and the term "Country Specific Information" will replace "Consular Information Sheet" on Travel.State.Gov (TSG) and other State Department websites. The Worldwide Caution, formerly a type of Public Announcement, will become a separate document, updated semi-annually, that informs Americans of long-term global and regional threats overseas. Current regional Public Announcements on the Middle East/North Africa, Central Asia, and East Africa will be folded into the Worldwide Caution.

Travel Alerts

Travel Alerts are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions, generally within a particular country, that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high-profile events such as international conferences or regional sports events are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert.

Travel Alerts need not be restricted to a single country. The Department may decide to issue a Regional Travel Alert for short-term conditions, such as those described above, which affect several countries. While a Travel Alert should not substitute for a Travel Warning, Travel Alerts can recommend that American citizens reconsider or defer travel to a country or region for the duration of the short term conditions mentioned.

The opening paragraph of a Travel Alert should describe, as explicitly as possible, the developments that prompted its issuance. When a new Travel Alert supersedes an existing one, the first paragraph will also include an evaluation of whether the situation in the country is improving, deteriorating, or unchanged.

Travel Alerts are issued for a specific period, usually 90 days or less, and expire automatically at the end of the prescribed period, unless extended by the Department. If conditions warrant, the Department may cancel a Travel Alert before the end of the prescribed period via ALDAC and press release.

Travel Warnings

Travel Warnings recommend that U.S. citizens defer or reconsider travel to a country due to a protracted situation that is dangerous or unstable. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government's ability to assist U.S. citizens is constrained due to a drawdown or closure at an embassy or consulate, even if the underlying condition is expected to be of limited duration. A Travel Warning must be issued whenever a post goes to authorized or ordered departure status.

The opening paragraph of a Travel Warning should describe, as explicitly as possible, the developments in the country that prompted the issuance of the warning. The first paragraph also states that U.S. citizens should defer or reconsider travel to a country due to the situation and/or because the U.S. Government's ability to assist them is constrained by an embassy drawdown or closure. When a new Travel Warning supersedes an existing one,

the first paragraph will also include an evaluation of whether the situation in the country is improving, deteriorating, or unchanged.

Travel Warnings are reviewed continually and are updated at least every six months to ensure that the most current safety and security information is shared with the American public. Travel Warnings are not issued for a specific period and do not expire automatically. When conditions warrant, the Department will cancel a Travel Warning, announcing the cancellation via an ALDAC and a press release.

----- Worldwide Caution -----

The Worldwide Caution (WWC) reminds Americans to maintain a high level of vigilance and to bolster their personal security while overseas. It also informs Americans of ongoing security concerns, including the continual threat of terrorist actions and violence against Americans and American interests overseas. The Worldwide Caution pays particular attention to regions of concern where there is a continued threat of terrorism.

The Worldwide Caution is reviewed continually and is updated at least every six months to ensure the most current general and regional safety and security information is shared with the American public.

----- Frequently Asked Questions -----

Q: Why has the State Department changed the terms "Public Announcement" and "Consular Information Sheet?"

A: These terms were changed because we realized that they were often ambiguous to the general public. The new terms - Travel Alert and Country Specific Information - more effectively describe their purpose.

Q: What's the difference between a Travel Alert and a Travel Warning?

A: Travel Alerts describe short-term conditions affecting a country or region that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, election-related violence, and major international conferences or sporting events are examples of situations that might generate a Travel Alert.

Travel Warnings describe longer-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government's ability to assist American

citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff.

Q: What is the Worldwide Caution?

A: The Worldwide Caution reminds Americans to maintain a high level of vigilance and to bolster their personal security while overseas. It contains information about ongoing security concerns, including the continual threat of terrorist actions and violence against Americans and American interests overseas. The Worldwide Caution pays particular attention to regions of concern where there is a continued threat of terrorism.

Q: How often is all this information updated?

A: The State Department constantly reviews its overseas safety and security information. Because a Travel Alert describes short-term conditions, its information is generally valid for the duration of the Alert, normally 90 days or less. Travel Warnings and the Worldwide Caution are reviewed continually and are updated every six months or earlier, as needed. They do not expire automatically.

Country Specific Information: A New Look

The State Department's Country Specific Information (CSI) pages (formerly Consular Information Sheets) on travel.state.gov will sport a new look beginning in February 2008. The changes will make the information more logical, easier to navigate, and user-friendly. Some of the improvements include:

- a Table of Contents at the top of each CSI so users can jump to the section they are interested in;
- a country map showing major cities and natural features; and
- links to applicable Travel Alerts or Travel Warnings at the top of the CSI, as well as the U.S. Citizens Services section of each embassy/consulate Internet website.

Information about these changes to the Consular Information Program can be found online at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_3910.html.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at <http://travel.state.gov> where the current Worldwide Caution Public Announcement, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. Up to date security information can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States, or, for

callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00am to 8:00pm EST, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

American citizens traveling or residing overseas are encouraged to register with the appropriate U.S. Embassy or Consulate on the State Department's travel registration website at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>.

For any emergencies involving American citizens, please contact the American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit of the U.S. Embassy. The Consular Section Embassy is located at the corner of Cesar Nicolas Penson Street and Máximo Gómez Avenue, Santo Domingo, D.R.; telephone 809-731-4294; after hours emergency telephone 809-221-2171; ACS unit fax 809-689-6142; e-mail acssantodom@state.gov; web page www.usemb.gov.do.